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"A FEW LOOSE STRANDS"

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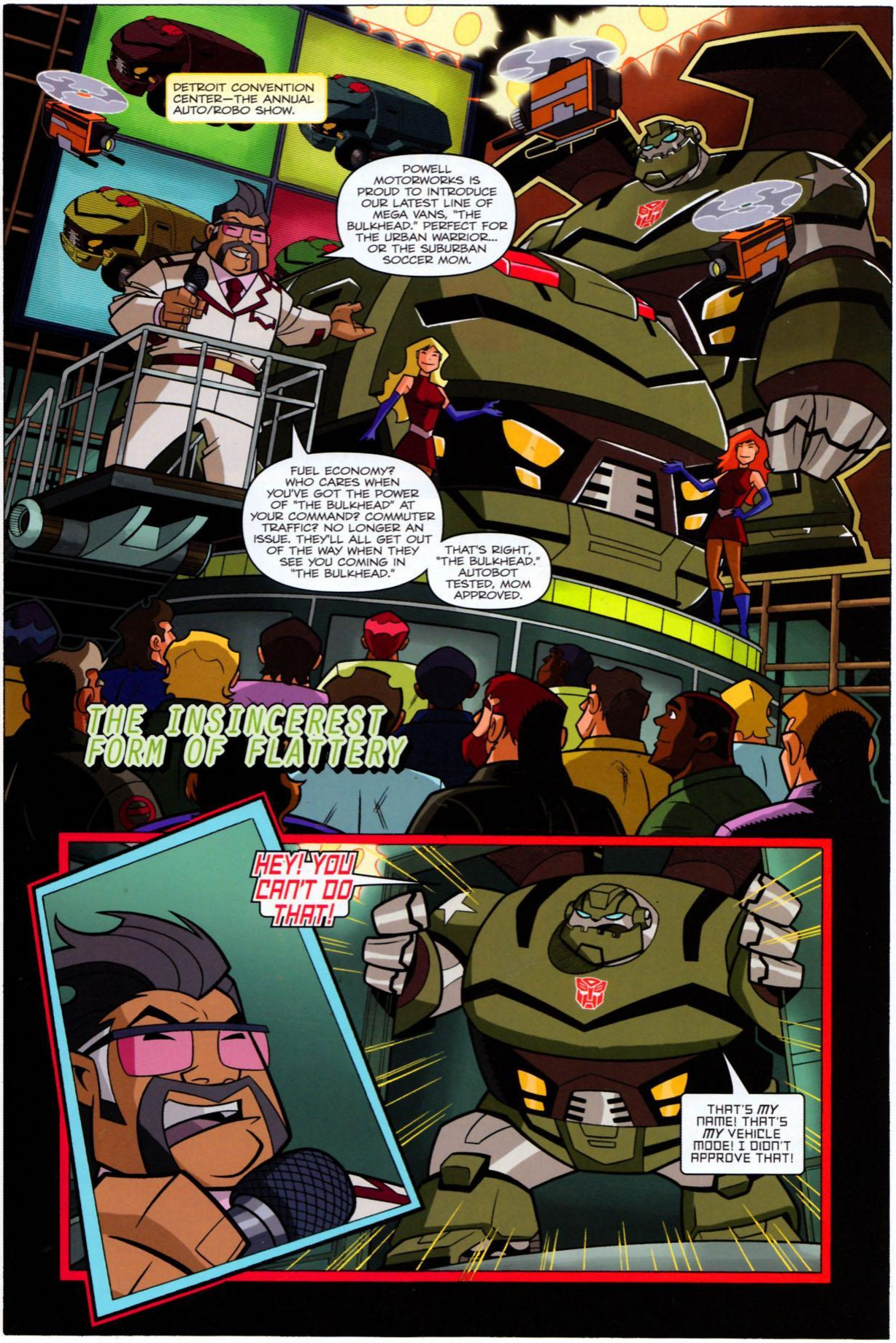

DETROIT CONVENTION CENTER—THE ANNUAL AUTO/ROBO SHOW.
POWELL MOTORWORKS IS PROUD TO INTRODUCE OUR LATEST LINE OF MEGA VANS, "THE BULKHEAD." PERFECT FOR THE URBAN WARRIOR... OR THE SUBURBAN SOCCER MOM.
FUEL ECONOMY? WHO CARES WHEN YOU'VE GOT THE POWER OF "THE BULKHEAD" AT YOUR COMMAND? COMMUTER TRAFFIC? NO LONGER AN ISSUE. THEY'LL ALL GET OUT OF THE WAY WHEN THEY SEE YOU COMING IN "THE BULKHEAD."
THAT'S RIGHT, "THE BULKHEAD." AUTOBOT TESTED, MOM APPROVED.
THE INSINCEREST FORM OF FLATTERY
HEY! YOU CAN'T DO THAT!
THAT'S MY NAME! THAT'S MY VEHICLE MODE! I DIDN'T APPROVE THAT!

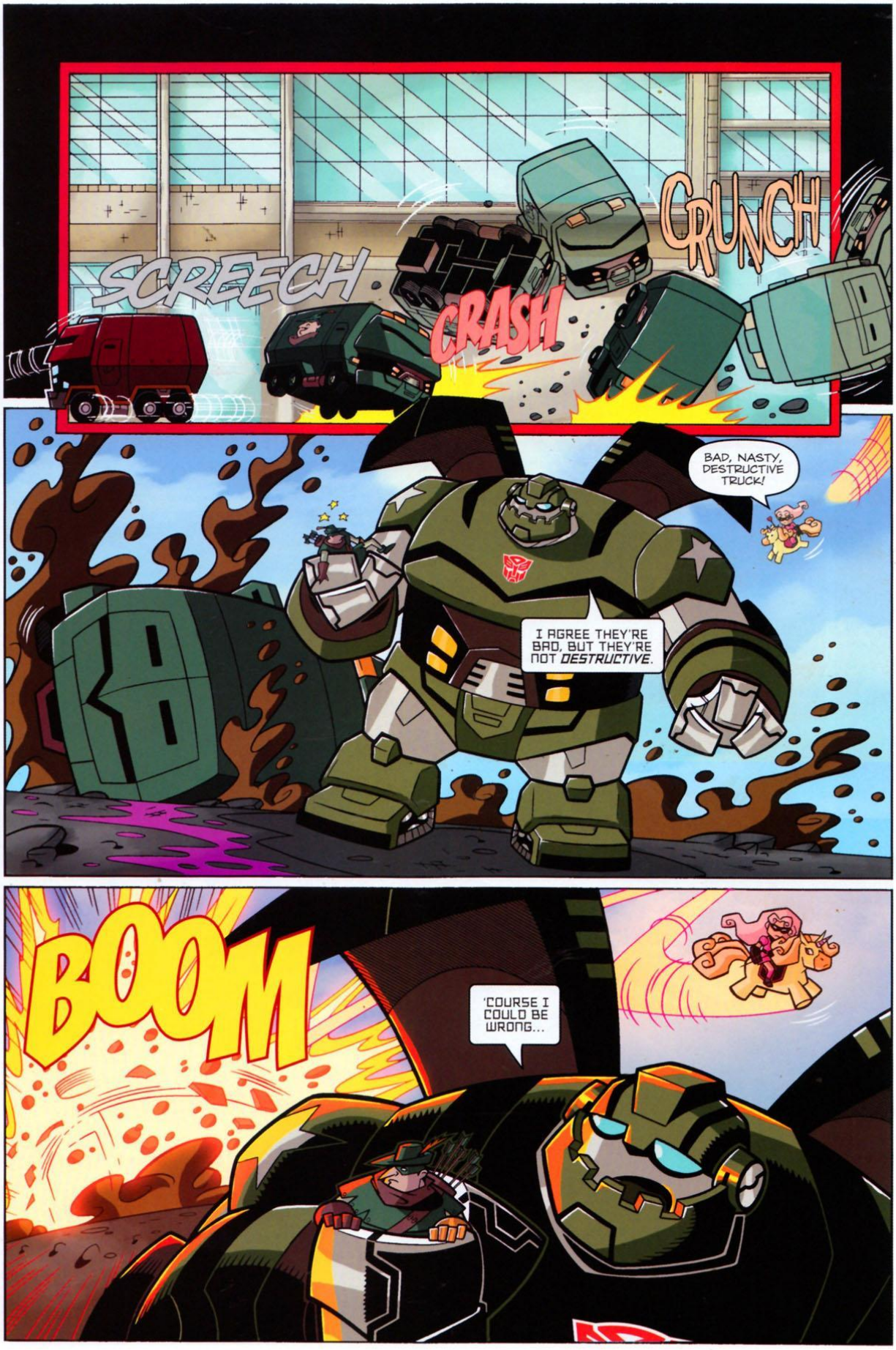
AND I SUPPOSE YOU'VE REGISTERED THE PATENT AND COPYRIGHTED YOUR NAME AND IMAGE.
UH... NO.
GOOD. 'CAUSE IT WOULDN'T HAVE HELPED.
YOU'RE A PUBLIC FIGURE. AND POWELL MOTORWORKS HAS BEEN MANUFACTURING AND SELLING THESE EXACT SAME SWAT ASSAULT VEHICLES FOR YEARS, SUPPLYING POLICE DEPARTMENTS AND PARAMILITARY ORGANIZATIONS AROUND THE GLOBE WITH THESE EXACT SAME VEHICLES. SO YOU'RE LUCKY I DON'T SUE YOU!
ALTHOUGH, COME TO THINK OF IT, I'LL HAVE OUR LEGAL COUNSEL LOOK INTO THAT.
WELL... YOU SHOULDN'T DO IT. 'CAUSE IT'S WRONG. AND I DON'T LIKE IT. AND... WHY DO SOCCER MOMS NEED A SWAT ASSAULT VEHICLE ANYWAY?
LISTEN TO ME, EVERYONE! I DON'T CARE WHAT HE SAYS. DON'T BUY THE BULKHEAD!
THAT OVERGROWN OAF IS RUINING MY EVENT! BUT I SUPPOSE HE'S FREE TO SAY WHATEVER HE WANTS...

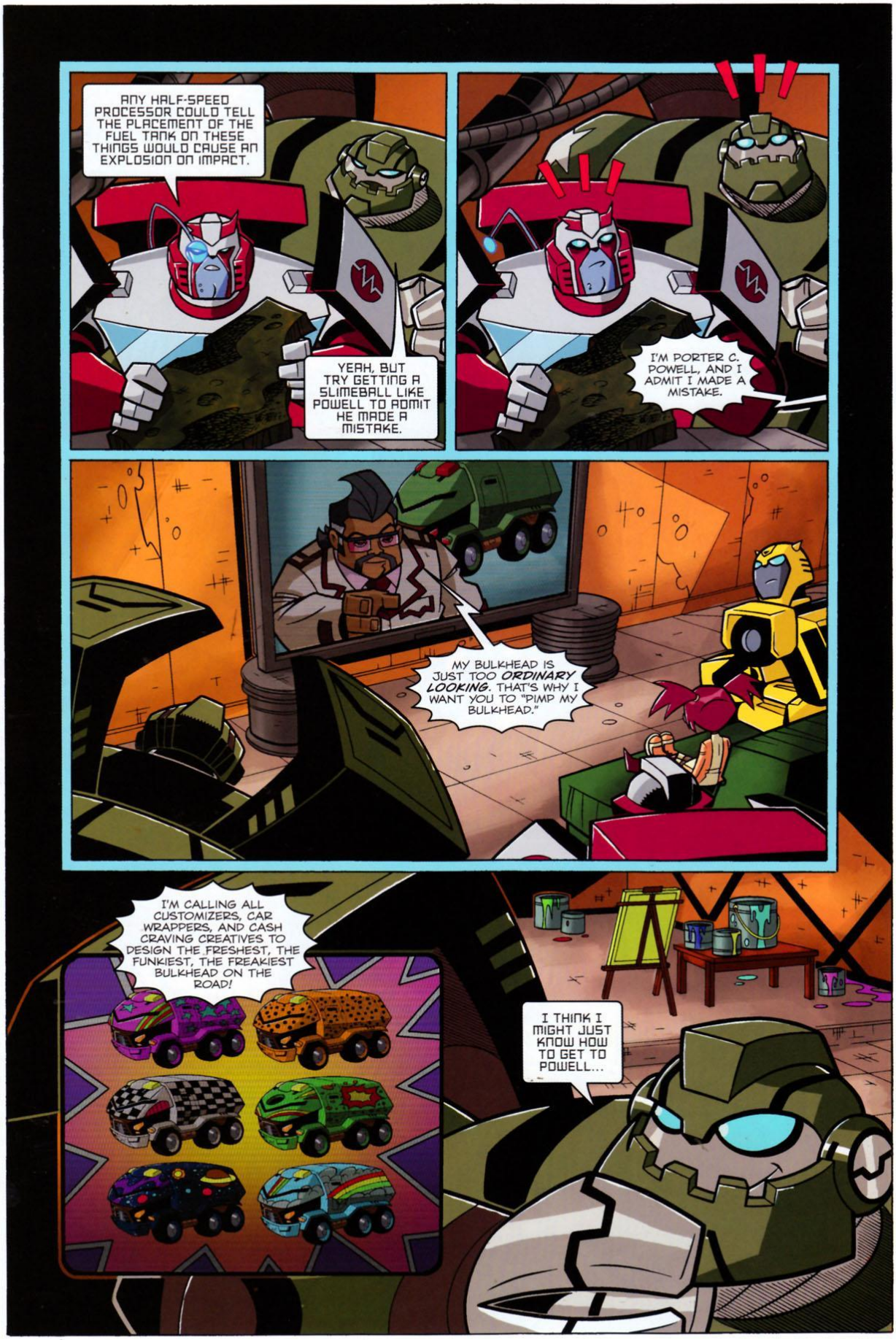
...JUST LIKE I'M FREE TO CHOP IT UP AND PUT IT IN ANY ORDER THAT SUITS ME.
LISTEN TO ME, EVERYONE! YOU SHOULD... BUY THE BULKHEAD! 'CAUSE... I... CARE...
ARRRRGH!
LET IT GO, BIG GUY!
...SOCCER MOMS NEED A SWAT ASSAULT VEHICLE...
SO THERE'S A BUNCHA MEGA VANS THAT LOOK LIKE YOU.
WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

CIRCUIT GUYS
CARLY? YOU REALLY THINK WE CAN FIT IT IN THE VAN?
OF COURSE, SPIKE, SWEETIE. IT'S A BULKHEAD!
HEY! WHADAYA THINK YOU'RE DOIN'?!

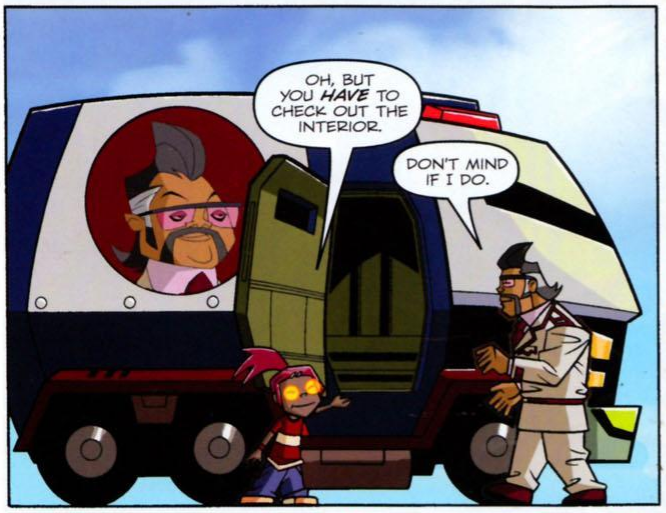
WHRR TSCHZZ TSCHZZ TSCHZZ CHK
I'M ON A STAKEOUT HERE!
GREAT, AND NOW THE CROOK'S GETTING AWAY!
FORSOOTH! YON GREEN GARGANTUAN APPROACHETH WITH VEXING VELOCITY!
FORTUNATELY, I ART PREPARED WITH MINE OWN GETAWAY CHARIOT!
BOOM BOOM BOOM
DOES ANYONE ELSE THINK THESE BULKHEAD CARS ARE A BAD IDEA?!

I THINK THEY'RE A *VERY* BAD IDEA!
THEY'RE BIG AND THEY'RE MEAN AND THEY'RE VIOLENT AND THEY'RE UGLY!
ALTHOUGH THAT ONE'S NOT TOO BAD.
CURSE THIS UNWIELDY GARGANTUAN! MY KINGDOM FOR A HYBRID!


SCREECH
CRASH
CRUNCH
BAD, NASTY, DESTRUCTIVE TRUCK!
I AGREE THEY'RE BAD, BUT THEY'RE NOT *DESTRUCTIVE*.
BOOM
'COURSE I COULD BE WRONG...


ANY HALF-SPEED PROCESSOR COULD TELL THE PLACEMENT OF THE FUEL TANK ON THESE THINGS WOULD CAUSE AN EXPLOSION ON IMPACT.
YEAH, BUT TRY GETTING A SLIMEBALL LIKE POWELL TO ADMIT HE MADE A MISTAKE.
I'M PORTER C. POWELL, AND I ADMIT I MADE A MISTAKE.
MY BULKHEAD IS JUST TOO ORDINARY LOOKING. THAT'S WHY I WANT YOU TO "PIMP MY BULKHEAD."
I'M CALLING ALL CUSTOMIZERS, CAR WRAPPERS, AND CASH CRAVING CREATIVES TO DESIGN THE FRESHEST, THE FUNKIEST, THE FREAKIEST BULKHEAD ON THE ROAD!
I THINK I MIGHT JUST KNOW HOW TO GET TO POWELL...

POWELL MOTORWORKS PRESENTS:
PIMP MY BULKHEAD
I THINK WE HAVE OUR WINNER...


OH, BUT YOU *HAVE* TO CHECK OUT THE INTERIOR.
DON'T MIND IF I DO.

I DON'T SEE WHAT'S SO SPECIAL ABOUT–EH?
SLAM

THOK
SCREECH
VROOOOM

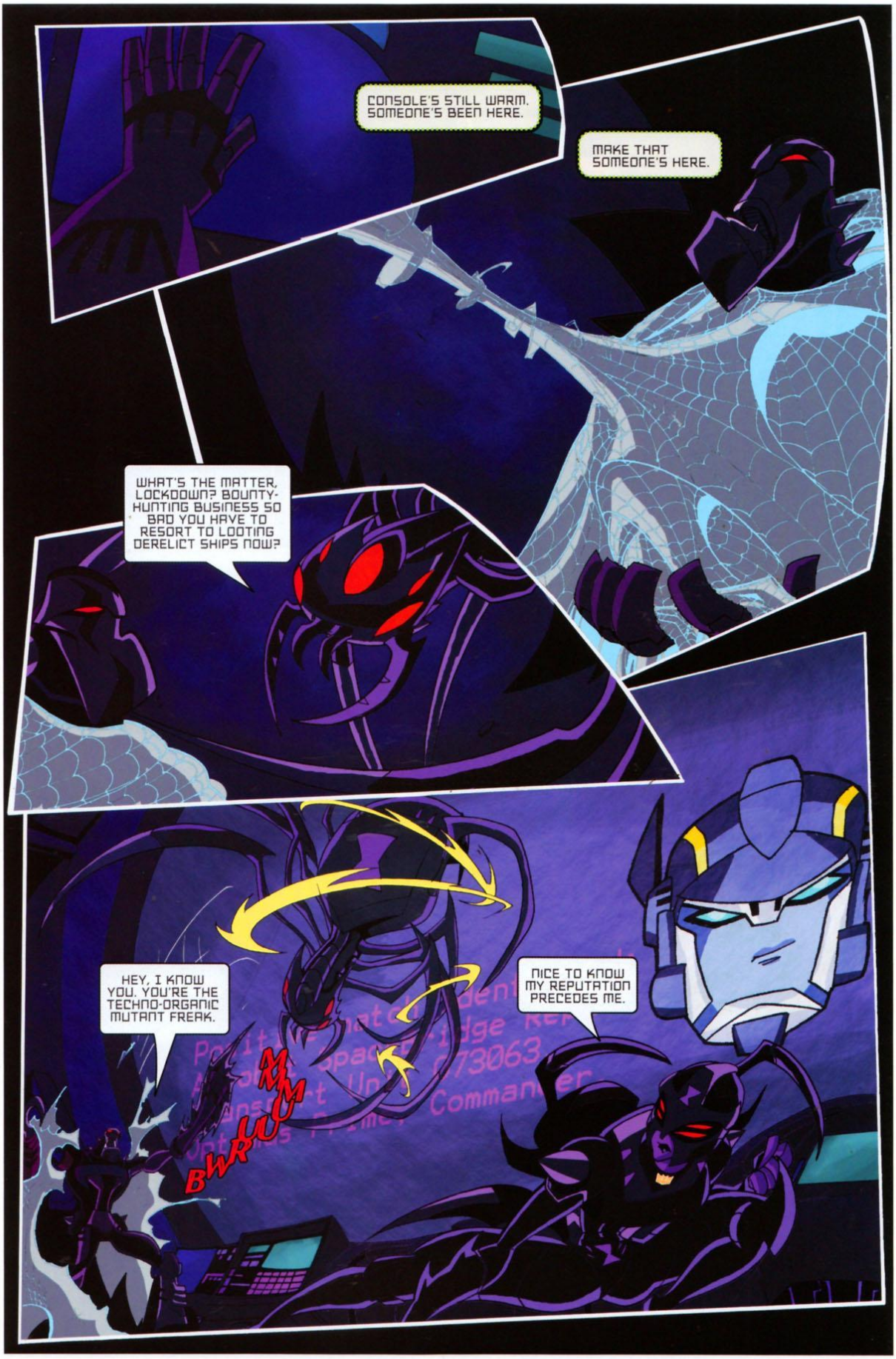
WAIT! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?! WHERE ARE YOU TAKING ME?!
SCREECH
WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO DO?! KILL ME?! DON'T YOU KNOW THESE THINGS ROLL OVER ON A TURN AT TWENTY MILES AN HOUR?!
SCREECH
I DEMAND YOU LET ME OUT OF THIS VEHICLE! THESE THINGS ARE UNSAFE AT ANY SPEED! THEY EXPLODE ON IMPACT! THEY'RE NOTHING BUT GAS-GUZZLING DEATH TRAPS!

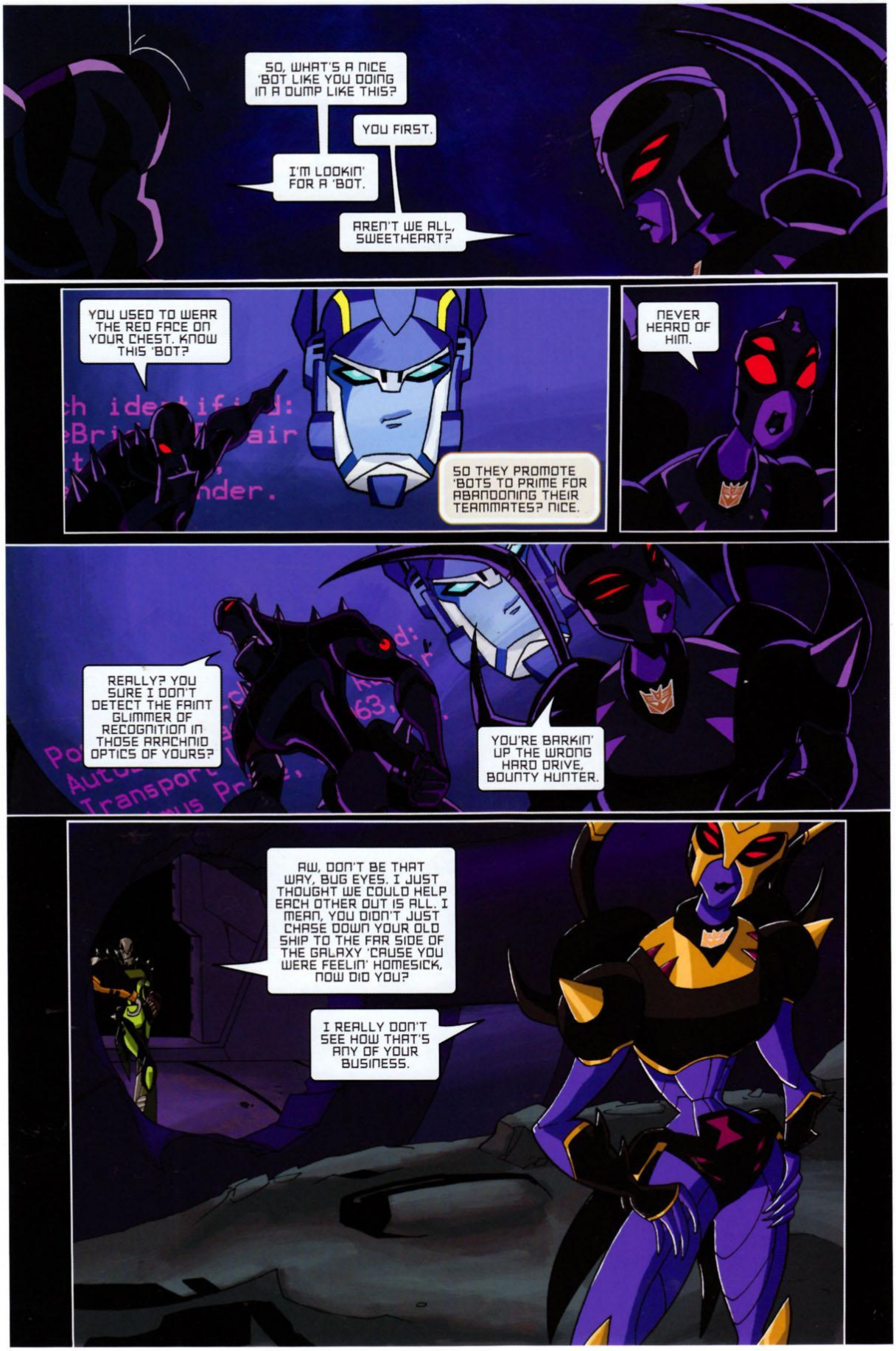
I DON'T SUPPOSE THIS THING WAS FILMING...
OH YEAH, IT WAS FILMING.
POWELL MOTORWORKS WAS FORCED TO RECALL THE ENTIRE LINE OF "BULKHEAD" MEGAVANS AFTER CEO PORTER C. POWELL'S ON-CAMERA ADMISSION THAT THE VEHICLES ARE NOTHING BUT, QUOTE, "GAS-GUZZLING DEATH TRAPS"...
RECALL
SURE FEELS GOOD TO BE BACK IN GREEN AGAIN.
NICE TO KNOW YOUR ARTISTIC TALENT CAN COME IN HANDY.
WHAT I CAN'T FIGURE OUT IS WHO IN THEIR RIGHT PROCESSOR WOULD WANT TO RIDE AROUND IN SUCH A GAUDY CUSTOM PAINT JOB IN THE FIRST PLACE?
HEY, GUYS! WHADDYA THINK OF THE NEW LOOK?
END.

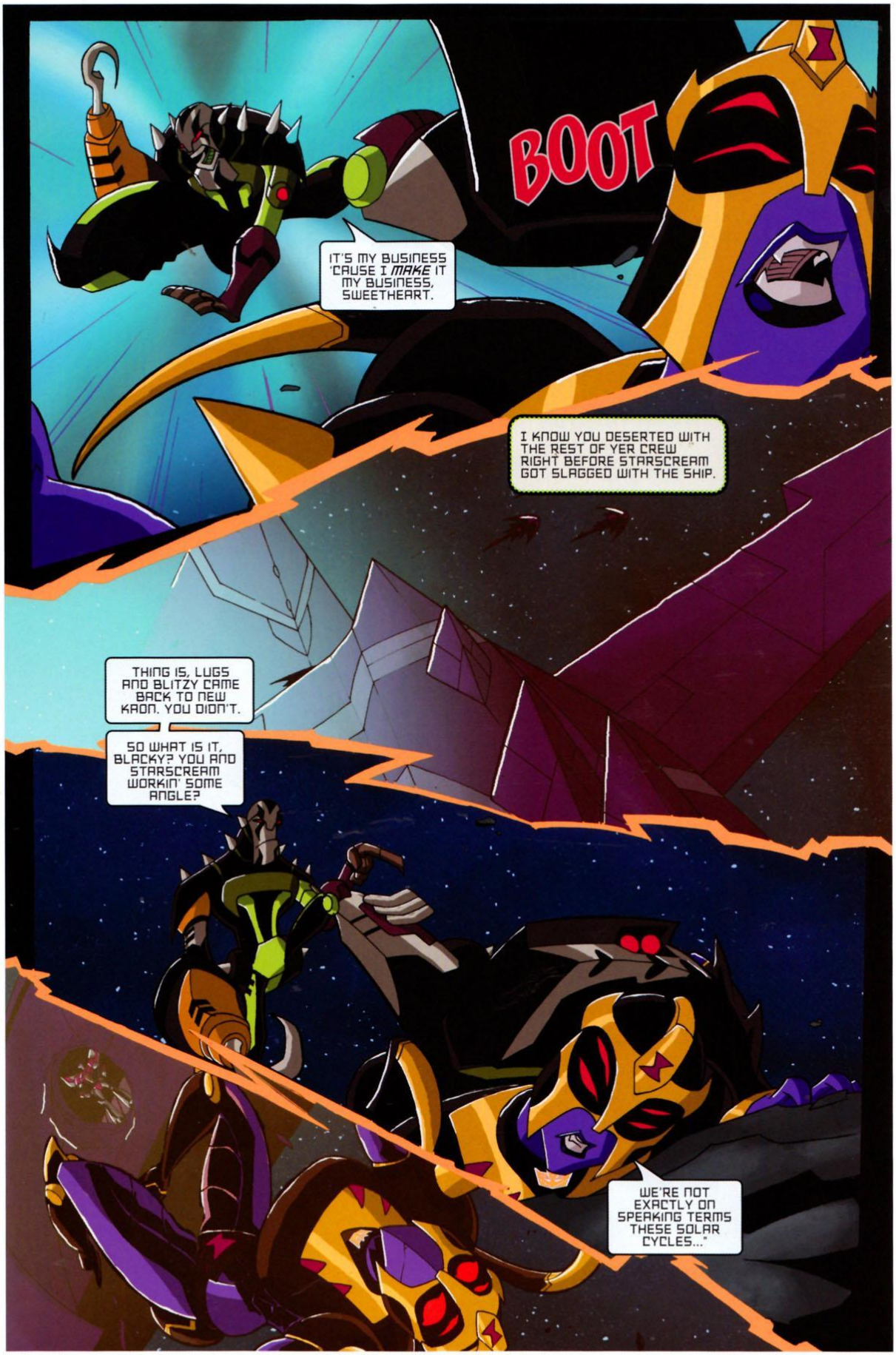
JUST SOME BARREN ROCK, ORBITING SOME BLUE-LIQUID-COVERED ORGANIC PLANET, IN SOME LONG-FORGOTTEN SECTOR OF THE GALAXY. NO REASON FOR ANY 'BOT TO WANDER ALL THE WAY OUT HERE.
THING IS, I'M NOT JUST *ANY* 'BOT. I'M THE BEST THERE IS.
ONLY LEADS I GOT WORKIN' ARE A COUPLE A' RUMORS, AND A WHOLE LOTTA LUCK, MOST OF IT BAD.
BUT THAT LAST PART'S ABOUT TO CHANGE.
JUST ANOTHER SOLAR CYCLE IN THE LIFE OF A BOUNTY HUNTER.
A FEW LOOSE STRANDS
SOME 'BOTS ARE IN IT FOR THE GLORY, SOME FOR THE ADVENTURE, SOME EVEN ACTUALLY BELIEVE IN THE "CAUSE." ME, I'M IN IT FOR THE UPGRADES.

AND IF THIS ONE PAYS OFF, I'M LOOKIN' AT SOME OF THE SWEETEST UPGRADES OF MY CAREER.
CONSIDER THIS YOUR DOWN PAYMENT, LOCKDOWN. BRING ME THE AUTOBOT RESPONSIBLE FOR TAKING MEGATRON OFFLINE AND YOU CAN NAME YOUR OWN PRICE.
HMM... I'VE ALWAYS BEEN KINDA PARTIAL TO YOUR BUDDY'S EXPLOSIVE PUNCH.
INFIDEL! YOU DARE SUGGEST OUR GLORIOUS LEADER MEGATRON IS OFFLINE?!
MISERABLE BOUNTY HUNTING SCUM! YOU WANT ME TO PAY YOU OFF WITH LUGNUT'S "PUNCH OF KILL EVERYTHING"?! YOU WANT ME TO BETRAY A LOYAL SERVANT OF MEGATRON, JUST SO I CAN TEAR SOME PUNY LITTLE AUTOBOT'S SPARK OUT AND CRUSH IT WITH MY BARE SERVO?!
SOUNDS CRAZY! LET'S DO IT! HAHAHAHAHAHA!
THERE'S AN OLD DECEPTICON SAYING: "NEVER MAKE A DEAL WITH A TRIPLE-CHANGER." BUT SOMETHIN' TELLS ME BLITZY'LL BE GOOD FOR HIS WORD.
'SPECIALLY IF LUGS EVER FINDS OUT HIS THREE-FACED BUDDY'S BEEN MAKIN' DEALS BEHIND HIS BACK.

MEGATRON'S SHIP LOOKS LIKE IT'S SEEN BETTER SOLAR CYCLES. LONG AS THE FLIGHT RECORDER SURVIVED, I'LL GET WHAT I NEED.
MAGNIFY IMAGE. HIGH REZ.
REVIEW FLIGHT LOG DATED STELLAR CYCLE GI-9,234,597; SOLAR CYCLE 0248; MEGA CYCLE 0900.
BINGO.
POSITIVE MATCH IDENTIFIED: AUTOBOT SPACEBRIDGE REPAIR TRANSPORT UNIT 073063, OPTIMUS PRIME, COMMANDER.
UNIVERSAL CODE BREAKER MODIFICATION SHOULD GET ME INTO THE AUTOBOT DATA SYSTEM...
MEGS WAS TAKEN DOWN BY A REPAIR CREW? SOMETHIN' DON'T ADD UP HERE.

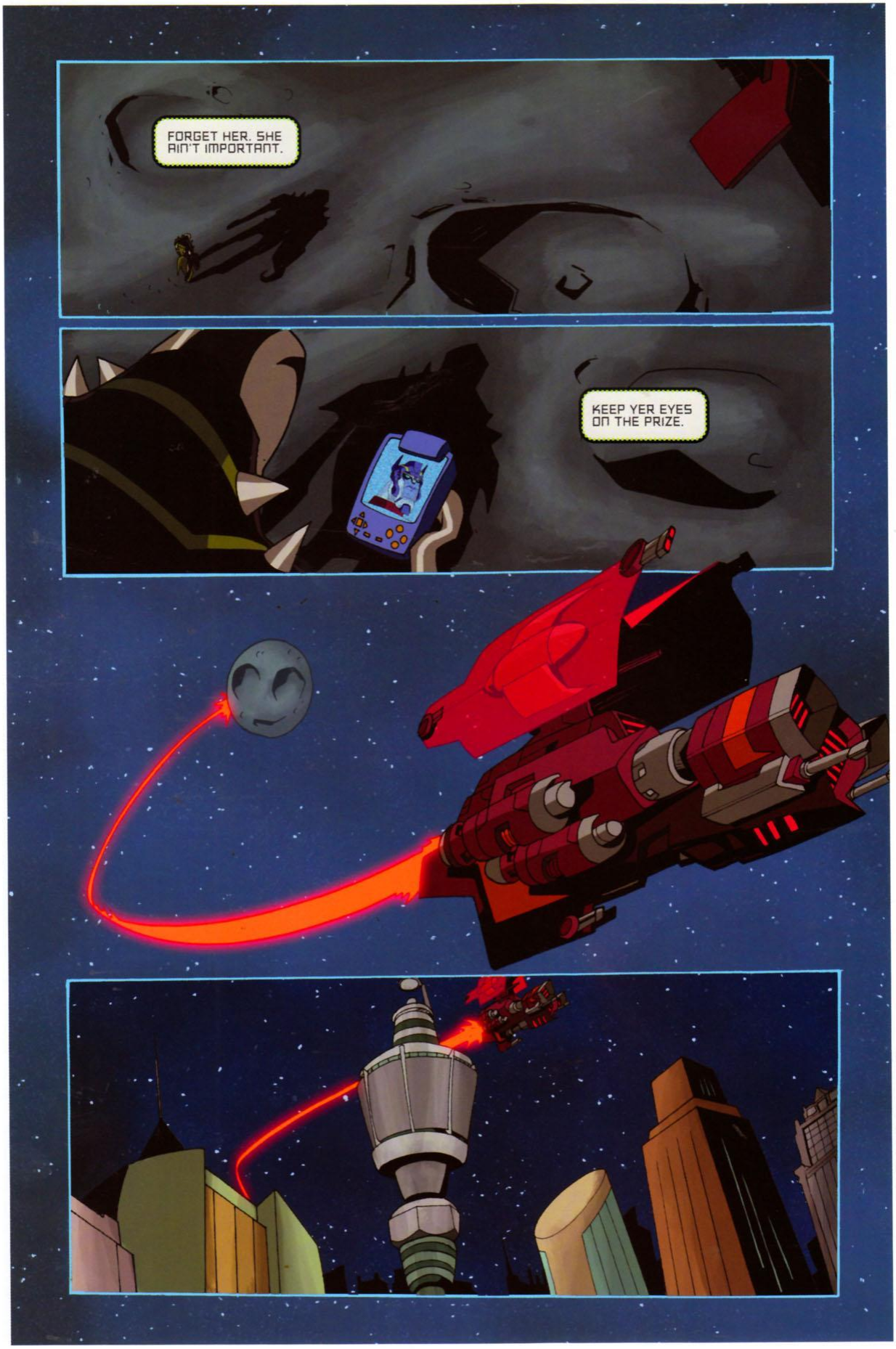

CONSOLE'S STILL WARM. SOMEONE'S BEEN HERE.
MAKE THAT SOMEONE'S HERE.
WHAT'S THE MATTER, LOCKDOWN? BOUNTY-HUNTING BUSINESS SO BAD YOU HAVE TO RESORT TO LOOTING DERELICT SHIPS NOW?
HEY, I KNOW YOU. YOU'RE THE TECHNO-ORGANIC MUTANT FREAK.
NICE TO KNOW MY REPUTATION PRECEDES ME.
BWRUM

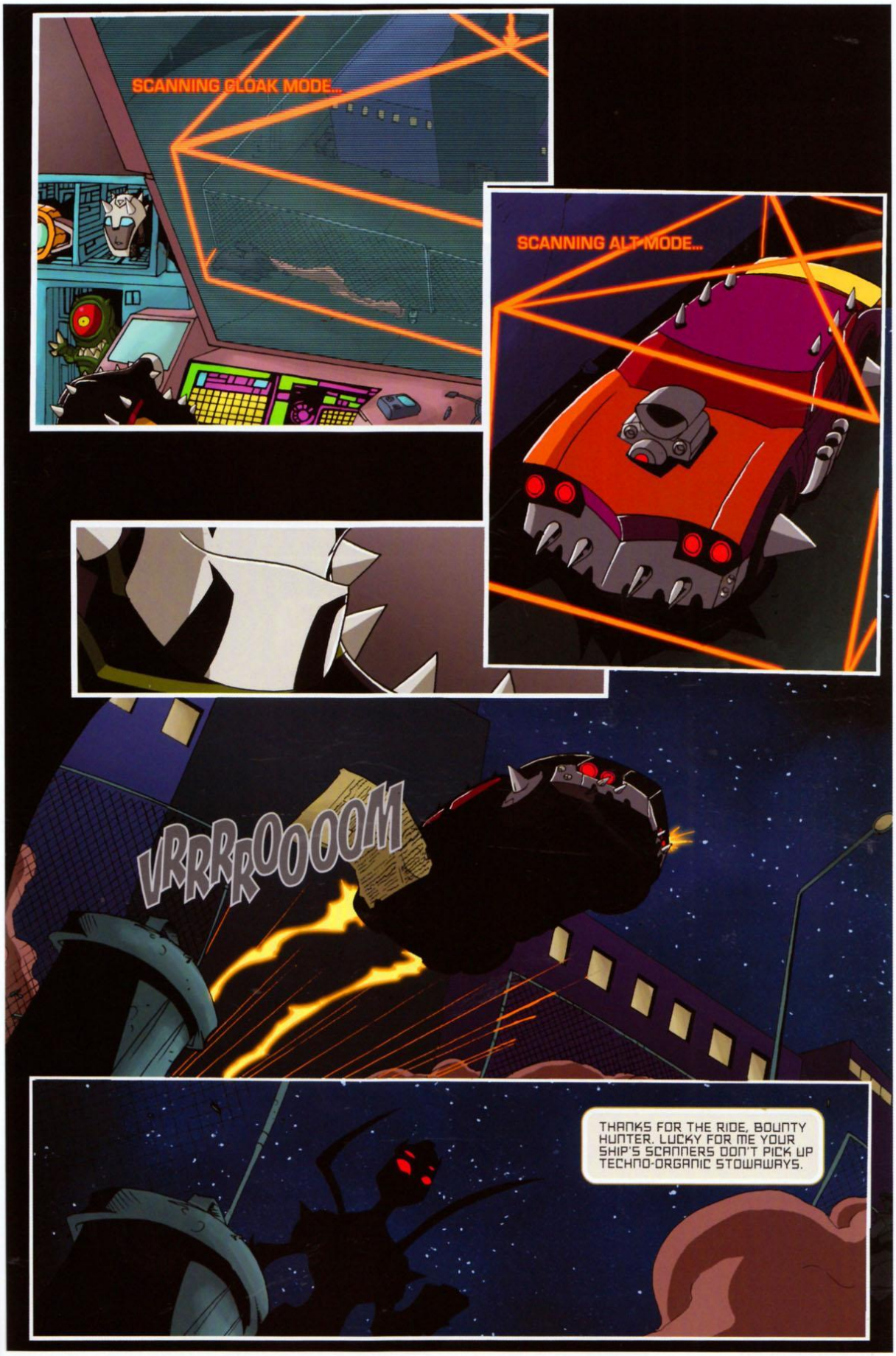

SO, WHAT'S A NICE 'BOT LIKE YOU DOING IN A DUMP LIKE THIS?
YOU FIRST.
I'M LOOKIN' FOR A 'BOT.
AREN'T WE ALL, SWEETHEART?
YOU USED TO WEAR THE RED FACE ON YOUR CHEST. KNOW THIS 'BOT?
SO THEY PROMOTE 'BOTS TO PRIME FOR ABANDONING THEIR TEAMMATES? NICE.
NEVER HEARD OF HIM.
REALLY? YOU SURE I DON'T DETECT THE FAINT GLIMMER OF RECOGNITION IN THOSE ARACHNID OPTICS OF YOURS?
YOU'RE BARKIN' UP THE WRONG HARD DRIVE, BOUNTY HUNTER.
AW, DON'T BE THAT WAY, BUG EYES. I JUST THOUGHT WE COULD HELP EACH OTHER OUT IS ALL. I MEAN, YOU DIDN'T JUST CHASE DOWN YOUR OLD SHIP TO THE FAR SIDE OF THE GALAXY 'CAUSE YOU WERE FEELIN' HOMESICK, NOW DID YOU?
I REALLY DON'T SEE HOW THAT'S ANY OF YOUR BUSINESS.


BOOT
IT'S MY BUSINESS 'CAUSE I *MAKE* IT MY BUSINESS, SWEETHEART.
I KNOW YOU DESERTED WITH THE REST OF YER CREW RIGHT BEFORE STARSCREAM GOT SLAGGED WITH THE SHIP.
THING IS, LUGS AND BLITZY CAME BACK TO NEW KAON. YOU DIDN'T.
SO WHAT IS IT, BLACKY? YOU AND STARSCREAM WORKIN' SOME ANGLE?
WE'RE NOT EXACTLY ON SPEAKING TERMS THESE SOLAR CYCLES..."

JUST KEEP TALKING. KEEP HIM DISTRACTED.
...BUT I'LL TELL YOU THIS MUCH. YOU WON'T FIND YOUR 'BOT ON THAT BLUE ROCK UP THERE. AUTOBOTS KNOW BETTER THAN TO STICK THEIR OLFACTORY SENSORS ON ORGANIC PLANETS. TAKE IT FROM ONE WHO LEARNED THE HARD WAY.
THE LAST THING I NEED IS SOME SCUM-BOT BOUNTY HUNTER GETTING HIS SERVOS ON THE ALLSPARK BEFORE I DO.
SO I GUESS YOU WON'T MIND IF I POKE AROUND AND HAVE ME A LITTLE LOOK-SEE. SEEIN' AS HOW YOU REALLY COULDN'T STOP ME ANYWAY.
DON'T BE SO SURE.

DOWNLOAD'S WAY TOO POWERFUL. HOW MANY PERSONAL MODIFICATIONS DOES ONE 'BOT NEED ANYWAY?
CAN'T HANDLE IT ALL. I'M GONNA...
UGH... HOW LONG HAVE I BEEN OUT?
LOOKS LIKE BLACKARACHNIA CUT OUT. NO SURPRISE THERE.


FORGET HER. SHE AIN'T IMPORTANT.
KEEP YER EYES ON THE PRIZE.


SCANNING CLOAK MODE...
SCANNING ALT-MODE...
VRRRROOOOM
THANKS FOR THE RIDE, BOUNTY HUNTER. LUCKY FOR ME YOUR SHIP'S SCANNERS DON'T PICK UP TECHNO-ORGANIC STOWAWAYS.

SO, OPTIMUS... HOW EXACTLY DOES A REPAIR CREW COMMANDER END UP WITH THE ALLSPARK?
WONDER IF I SHOULD WARN HIM LOCKDOWN'S COMING FOR HIM...
...BUT THEN WHO'LL WARN HIM I'M COMING FOR HIM?
END.

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Issue #5